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Letter dated 31 January 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit herewith the conclusions of the General Affairs Council of the European Union on the Western Balkans (Federal Republic of Yugoslavia/Serbia), issued on 23 January 2001 (see annex).

I should be grateful if you could arrange to have the text of this letter and its annex circulated as a document of the Security Council.

(*Signed*) Pierre **Schori**
Permanent Representative

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Annex to the letter dated 31 January 2001 from the Permanent Representative of Sweden to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

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Conclusions of the General Affairs Council of the European Union on the Western Balkans (Federal Republic of Yugoslavia/Serbia)

The Council welcomes the free and fair conditions in which the legislative elections in Serbia in December were held. Their outcome confirms the determination of the people of Serbia to continue the consolidation of democracy in their country, initiated with the election last September of the President of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. The European Union looks forward to the formation of the new Serbian government.

Policies of democratic and economic reform, reconciliation and regional cooperation, will bring the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia closer to the European Union, through the "Stabilization and Association Process", in line with the Council's conclusions of May 1999.

To this end the Council underlines the need for the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia, like the other countries in the region, to meet the criteria of the European Union's "regional approach" agreed by the Council in 1997, building on commitments made by all participants at the Zagreb Summit, as regards respect for democratic principles, human rights and the rule of law, full cooperation with the International Tribunal for the Former Yugoslavia, respect for and protection of minorities, market economy reforms, regional cooperation, and compliance with obligations under Dayton/Paris and Security Council resolution 1244 (1999).

The Council recalls the important political and financial efforts already made by the European Union to encourage the consolidation of democracy and reforms in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia. As a further sign of its support, it decided to send a European Union Ministerial troika to Belgrade in early February.

The Council urges the authorities in Belgrade as well as in Podgorica to agree on an open and democratic process, within an overall Federal framework, to decide on a new constitutional arrangement for the relations between the components of the Federation acceptable to all the parties. The Council welcomes the readiness shown by President Kostunica to play a constructive role to that end. It underlines the importance of avoiding any unilateral action which could jeopardize this negotiating process and to ensure the democratic legitimacy of its outcome. It reaffirms its conviction that any renegotiation of the Federal relationship must be consistent with the internal stability of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia and the regional stability of South Eastern Europe.

The Council also calls for speedy release of Kosovo Albanian and other prisoners held without charge or on political grounds, as well as the accounting of missing persons from all sides.

The European Union strongly condemns the violence and illegal actions by ethnic Albanian armed groups in Southern Serbia and particularly in the Ground Safety Zone, and calls for an immediate and complete cessation of violence in this

area. The European Union welcomes the commitment of the Yugoslav authorities to respect the provisions of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) and the Military Technical Agreement and encourages them to continue to work towards a peaceful settlement based on democratic principles and full respect for human rights, fundamental freedoms and equality of all citizens and national communities.

The Council thanks and congratulates Mr. Kouchner for the remarkable work he has accomplished under difficult circumstances. It reiterates the European Union's full support to Mr. Haekkerup who has taken over the functions as Special Representative of the Secretary-General of the United Nations to Kosovo. The Council restates the need for implementation of Security Council resolution 1244 (1999) in all its parts.

In line with its conclusion of 20 November 2000 and with the final declaration of the Zagreb Summit, the Council approved the terms of reference for the high-level European Union/Albania Steering Group.